

Things you can do to help keep your lakes and streams clean

If you want to help birds and make sure they have a good fish supply (fish, crustaceans, etc.) from the Lake Winnebago (lake) environment, spread the word about alternatives to pesticides and fertilizers (excessive algae growth caused by fertilizers disrupts the natural balance in the lake, causing dangerously low oxygen levels to occur in the nighttime hours).

Start picking up trash around the lake if you notice a lot of trash coming from the storm drain system. Rain washes a mix of pollutants off of our streets, parking lots, and neighborhood yards. Pollutants such as soil, pet waste, motor oil, antifreeze, grass clippings, pesticides, and fertilizers wash into storm drains or ditches and eventually into the rivers and lakes without being treated at all. This is in contrast to the wastewater system that takes waste from the drains inside your house and goes through a septic treatment system and/or treatment plant before it enters the lake. This treated water is in many cases of higher quality than the water that is in the river already (untreated runoff carrying pollutants from neighborhoods, farms, etc.) This polluted runoff kills wildlife and contaminates our waterways.

Easy ways to reduce pollution:

1. Keep all litter out of storm drains, and bring a trash bag with you on walks near streams and lakes to pick up trash (Don't forget your gloves!).
2. Pick up pet waste. Wrap it tightly in a bag, and throw it in the garbage. Or flush it down the toilet.
3. Recycle used motor oil and antifreeze.
4. Learn about organic gardening, instead of resorting to pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
5. Compost your grass clippings.
6. Take unwanted household chemicals, oil paints, and solvents to a hazardous household waste collection center.

We as humans often restrict consumption of fish that contain harmful pesticides and chemicals, but water birds don't have a choice, since their full diet consists of fish and other creatures in our lakes and streams. We also have the luxury of drinking treated water from our treatment plants, whereas birds and other wildlife must drink from the streams and lake we have contaminated. The more the public learns about these issues, the faster we can do something about it and put an end to the needless suffering experienced by wildlife, while keeping the waters looking amazing!

Source: Meadow Lake – <http://www.birdcrosstitch.com/environment/MeadowLake.html>

For additional information on Stormwater pollution and the effect on Winnebago County lakes, rivers and streams, see:

- <http://wclwcd.org/watershed.thm>
- <http://wclwcd.org/i&e.htm>
- <http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm>